



City of San Diego

San Diego Fire-Rescue Fire False Alarm Changes for Fiscal Year 2012

JUNE 2011



False Alarm Problem Statement

- **False Alarm Statistics for San Diego Fire-Rescue**
 - Average 6,281 false alarms per year
 - 1,977 Hours of Effort
 - Cost to the City = \$541,679 annually
- **Reduces the Ability to Respond to Actual Emergencies**
- **Respond to Certain Addresses Around the City as Many as 20-40 Times in a Single Year.**
- **Common Causes**
 - Lack of Maintenance on Installed Systems
 - Poorly Installed Systems
 - Communication with Alarm Service Providers



Fire Alarm Response Model

- **Alarm Calls are Dispatched with the Closest Available Apparatus**
- **Most Common Response is by a Fully Staffed Fire Engine**
- **Hourly Cost Recovery (FY2011) for a Staffed Engine on Regular Duty:**
 - Apparatus Usage and Assignment = \$33 /hour
 - Fire Engine Staff (Captain, Engineer, Firefighter, and Firefighter Medic) = \$241 /hr
 - Total Hourly Cost Recovery Rate= \$274 /hr
- **Unit Task Time = 18.6 minutes**



History of False Alarms in San Diego

- **City First Implemented a Burglar, Robbery, and Emergency Alarm Ordinance in 1981**
- **Approximately 42,000 Active Permits in the Police's Alarm System**
- **SDPD Manages the Alarm Permitting Process**
 - Issuing Permits
 - Collecting Revenue
 - Researching Incidents to Confirm a False Alarm
 - Issuing Warning Letters
 - Citizen and Industry Outreach



San Diego Police Department Alarm Program

- **Permit**
 - 24 month
 - Alarm Business Obtains a Permit on Behalf of the Alarm User
 - \$100.24 Residential / \$173.25 Commercial
- **Permit Revocation**
 - Based on Repeated Occurrences of False Alarms
 - Repeats in 30/90/180/365 Days
 - Escalating Revocation Penalty \$110/\$220/\$440/\$2200
- **Unpermitted Penalty**
 - Cost Recovery Rate of \$146.25 per Call



Fire False Alarm Cost Recovery

- **SDFD Directed by City Council to Quantify the Impacts of Fire-Rescue Related False Alarms and Explore Options for Cost Recovery**
- **Fire False Alarms Included in the Office of the Independent Budget Analyst's Menu of Budget Options**
 - February and April, 2011
 - Identified as Feasible to Implement in FY 2012
- **Intent is to Reduce the Number of Fire-Rescue Related False Alarms and their Corresponding Operational Impact**



Fire False Alarm Options Considered

- **Permits vs. Nuisance Alarms**
 - Permit = Registered Alarm Systems
 - Benefit of Known Points of Contact
 - Nuisance Alarm = Unregistered Alarm System, Only Fees or Penalties are When the System Triggers Multiple False Alarms
 - No Known Points of Contact
 - Difficult to Locate Responsible Party
 - Partner with existing SDPD Alarm Program
 - Separate Fire-Rescue Program
- **Internal vs. 3rd Party Administration**



Proposed Strategy

- **Partner with San Diego Police Department to Amend the Current “Burglary, Robbery, and Emergency Alarm Systems” Section of the Municipal Code to Incorporate Fire-Rescue Related Response**
 - Common Administration
 - Shared Co-located Staffing
 - Common Systems and Procedures
 - Both Police and Fire-Rescue False Alarm Responses Will be Tracked and Will Count Against an Active Permit



Proposed Changes

Incorporate Fire-Rescue Responses into the Existing Police Alarm Permitting Process

Costs and Penalties	Current SDPD Rate Structure	Proposed SDFD Rate Structure for FY2012
Residential Permit (24 months)	\$100.25	SDPD Rate + \$18
Commercial Permit (24 months)	\$173.25	SDPD Rate + \$18
Fire Alarm Only (24 months)	N/A	\$18.00
1 st Permit Revocation Penalty	\$110.00	\$110.00
2 nd Permit Revocation Penalty	\$220.00	\$220.00
3 rd Permit Revocation Penalty	\$440.00	\$440.00
4 th and Subsequent Permit Revocations Penalty	\$2,200.00	\$2,200.00
Unpermitted Penalty	\$146.25	\$85.00 (Fire) \$146.25 (Police)



Comparison to Other Agencies

Jurisdiction	Permit Cost and Period	1 st False Alarm	2 nd False Alarm	3 rd False Alarm	4 th False Alarm	5 th False Alarm	Addtl	Notes
Carlsbad (1985)	\$60/\$60 \$458/\$585 Indefinite	\$0	\$85 \$310	\$160 \$610	\$305 \$1315	\$305 \$1315	\$305 \$1315	Existing Fee Structure New Proposed Fees
Del Mar (2010)	No permit	\$0	\$0	\$60	\$75	\$100	\$150	
El Cajon (1995)	No Permit	\$0	\$0	\$75	\$75	\$75	\$75	
Escondido (2005)	\$15 12 months	\$0	\$0	\$50	\$100	\$150	\$200	If not registered, fees double.
Lemon Grove (2009)	\$75 Indefinitely	\$0	\$0	\$150	N/A	N/A	N/A	Occupancy is billed at most once per year.
National City (1998)	\$20/\$40 24 month	\$0	\$0	\$853	\$878	\$903	\$953	
Oceanside (2010)	No Charge Indefinite	\$0	\$100	\$200	\$500	\$1000	\$1000	
Poway (1994)	\$69 Indefinite	\$0	\$0	\$75	\$150	\$150	\$150	External billing company used.
San Diego Proposed	\$18 24 month	\$0	\$0	\$195	\$305	\$525	\$2,285	
San Marcos (1994)	\$0 Indefinite	\$0	\$0	\$75	\$150	\$250	\$300	Permit required upon installation
Santee (1989)	\$18/\$54/\$72 Indefinite	\$0	\$0	\$50	\$75			Permit part of the building permit process



Comparison to Other Agencies

Jurisdiction	Permit Cost	1 st False Alarm	2 nd False Alarm	3 rd False Alarm	4 th False Alarm	5 th False Alarm	Addtl False Alarms	Notes
Houston	\$60	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$300	\$35 for renewals, uses grouping system
Phoenix	No Permit	\$0	\$105	\$105	\$105	\$105	\$105	One free false alarm after class attendance.
San Francisco	No Permit	N/C	N/C	\$250	\$250	\$250	\$500	
Seattle	\$10 12 months	\$115 - \$230	\$115 - \$230	\$115 - \$230	\$115 - \$230	\$115 - \$230	\$115 - \$230	Alarm companies permitted and are charged for the false alarms



Fiscal Considerations

- **The City's Fiscal Year 2012 Proposed Revenue Budget Includes Fire-Rescue Related Alarm Revenue**
- **Revenue Estimation was Calculated Assuming New Fees will Not Go into Effect until November 1, 2011**
 - Allows Time to Transition to the Combined Police and Fire-Rescue Alarm Policies and Procedures

Revenue Type	Estimated Annual Revenue	Estimated Monthly Revenue	Adjusted for 8 months
Permit	\$370,440	\$30,870	\$246,960
Revocation Penalties and Cost Recovery	\$1,255,568	\$104,631	\$837,048
Total	\$1,626,008	\$135,501	\$1,084,008



City of San Diego

Questions?



Fire Alarm System Definition

- “*Fire Alarm System*” means a system or portion of a combination system monitors buildings or structures for emergency situations and annunciates the status of the fire alarm or initiates the appropriate fire-rescue response to the emergency situation.



False Alarm Definition

"False alarm" means any triggering of an *alarm system* that results in a response by law enforcement or fire-rescue personnel where an *emergency situation* does not exist. It includes activations caused by mechanical failure, malfunction, accidental tripping, misuse, or negligent maintenance by an *alarm business, alarm agent, or alarm user*. It does not include activations caused by weather conditions, telephone line problems, or any other factor over which the *alarm business, alarm agent, or alarm user* do not have direct or indirect control.



Emergency Situation Definition

- “***Emergency situation***” means
 - There is an uncontrolled fire actively burning in or near the building or structure
 - There is a hazardous environment that triggers an alarm system